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ABSTRACT

This paper offers a new consideration of the "body domestic" and the "body politic" in educational issues. It proposes that these entities be developed as complementary, rather than oppositional, theoretical categories to explain the historical development of, and contemporary issues in, family and consumer sciences (home economics). The text claims that the familial and the political can be conceptualized as systems that maintain a constant interdependent relationship to each other, thus opening up possibilities for consistent comparisons. It draws on Greek mythology to elaborate these possibilities. Hestia, the goddess of the hearth, is used as a feminist paradigm to examine how best to frame education for the familial/domestic sphere, whereas Hermes represents the male-dominated public space and thus signifies the political/civic sphere. The hestian/hermean paradigm describes two spatially differentiated and psycho-socially constructed domains that support dual systems of action that serve different purposes. The dual mythogems personify enduring aspects of the human condition and avoid such usages as "women's work" and "men's work," or describing caring tasks as feminine and controlling tactics as masculine. The mythogem also resolves the inherent tension in home economics that is due to it being a male-driven social science that centers on domestic life and the rubric of caring. (Contains 84 references.) (RJM)

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The "Body Domestic" and the "Body Politic": Education and Advocacy

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The words "private" and "public" have a distinct usage in education, but they convey a special meaning for home economics/family and consumer sciences educators whose mission relates to the household/family sphere. The private/public distinction between "Family" and "State" is discussed by Jeff Weintraub and Krishan Kumar (1997) in their edited volume *Public and Private in Thought and Practice: Perspectives on a Grand Dichotomy.* In Weintraub's view, to understand what either "private" or "public" means within a given framework, we need to know what is being contrasted and on what basis the contrast is being made. Instead of the commonly used metaphor of "intersection" (race, class, and gender), I argue for the utility of the "interface" metaphor used by system thinkers and advanced by writers such as Robert Jervis (1997) in *System Effects: Complexity in Political and Social Life.* For Jervis, a system effect occurs whenever (a) a set of units or elements is interconnected in some way so that changes in an element or in the relationship among elements changes, and changes are produced in other parts of the system, and (b) the system as a whole exhibits properties that differ from the behaviors of the parts.[1]

In earlier papers at AERA and in other venues, I proposed a dual systems paradigm with its origins in the 5th century BCE split between the ancient Greek *oikos* (household/family) and the ancient Greek *polis* (city/state). To re-claim earlier concepts of community, the Family/State interface can be analyzed using Hestia, ancient Greek goddess of the hearthfire, as a metaphor for that which is "private" and "familial." On this view, Hestia represents the "body domestic," that collectivity of *oikoi* (households/families) that meet the perennial human need for sustenance and nurturance in

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a domestic economy, called by the Greeks *oikonomikos.* The name of the goddess and the name of the hearth were the same: Hestia/hestia. The hearth was a site of reverence in households and in public plac[illegible]y contrast, I appropriate Hermes, ancient Greek god of commerce a[illegible]ommunication, as a metaphor for that which is "public" and "political," i.e., the "body politic."

I propose that these entities be further developed as complementary, rather than oppositional, theoretical categories to explain the historical development of and contemporary issues in the field variously called Family and Consumer Sciences in the United States and Home Economics elsewhere (Thompson, 1999). By proposing a dual lens through which the familial (hestian) and the political (hermean) can be conceptualized as systems that maintain a constant inter-dependent relationship to each other, the paradigm opens possibilities for consistent comparisons.

Looking Back to Move Ahead

I would like to frame this discussion within the hestian feminist paradigm, developed over the past decade (Thompson 1988; 1989a, b; 1992a, b, c, d; 1994a, b; 1995; 1999; 2000), in order to address two different aims of education, namely education for the familial, domestic sphere and education for the political, civic sphere (see Figure 1).

Hestia: Goddess of the Oikos-system or "Body Domestic"

In ancient Greece the *oikos,* comprised of a household, its members, and the natural, human, material, and constructed resource base necessary to maintain those who lived together in that space, was an ecological unit of habitat (often a farm or estate) and its in-habitants. Individual families may be viewed as "ecosystems" (Hook & Paolucci, 1970), while household/family units *(oikoi)* might be conceptualized collectively as an *oikos*-system. To my mind, the concept of the individual or particular family as an "ecosystem," or "life support system," describes family types both ancient and modern. Hestia, goddess of the hearthfire, was the "in-dwelling" protector of each and every Greek domestic unit. To the ancient Greeks, the *oikos* was more than a "house" in terms of shelter. It symbolized a lineage with a common place of residence, of which the hearth was the symbolic center. Members of an *oikos* shared a special bond. They shared a common past and a

common fate. Not all members of an *oikos* were kin. Some were slaves or servants. But all were interdependent parts of a system, the goal of which was *autarky*, or self-sufficiency. For the Greeks, individual autonomy was synonymous with freedom from coercion. The autarky of an *oikos* made the autonomy of male members of an *oikos* possible. In Brown's view, the ancient Greek male's identity as a free person meant that "he was head of a household (*oikos*) and member of a *polis*" (34).

Now, as then, the domestic, hestian domain supports a socially constructed system of inter-related activities essential to assure the sustenance and nurturance of an interdependent human group (called by moderns a "family," but designated by the Greeks as a "lineage"). The goddess Hestia presided over family activities from birth to death that were under the control of the women, servants, and slaves of the "house" (Thompson, 1996). In my view, Hestia is a fit metaphor for the socially constructed, self-organizing *(autopoetic)*, activities performed in household/family units for the benefit of their members. Some professionals in the human services refer to these as "ADLs," i.e., activities of daily life.

Hermes: God of the Polis-system or "Body Politic"

In ancient Greece, public space was marked by herms, icthyphallic representations of Hermes. Herms marked the space as male dominated. By contrast with the fixity and stability represented by Hestia's "dis-embodied" hearthfire, Hermes, god of communication and commerce, em-bodied change and mutability (Thompson, 1998). To maintain order among fractious lineages (*oikoi* or "houses"), the ancient Greek *polis* created numerous differentiated systems of publicly mediated activities, including the political, social, and cultural systems. We could refer to these as "APLs" activities of public life. The over-all goal of the hermean *polis*-system was (and is) to maintain order in the public realm through hierarchically organized command systems that, together with their subsystems, control (either directly or indirectly) the majority of the human and material resources needed by the *oikoi* to maintain the caring, life-sustaining functions human beings need to survive. Thus there is a relationship between the ADLs and the APLs that needs to be borne in mind. Systems thinking helps us to account for both as occurring simultaneously and, to a greater or lesser degree, independently or autonomously.

Gender in the Dual Systems Paradigm

The hestian/hermean paradigm describes two spatially differentiated and psycho-socially constructed domains that support dual systems of action that serve different purposes. The dual mythogems personify enduring aspects of the human condition. Each system serves human goals and interests but in different ways. Bearing in mind the systems' different purposes helps one to understand how functions are organized in each system. I call the private, primary, "first order" domain, whose overarching goals are sustenance and nurturance, activities essential for individual and family survival, "hestian." I call the public, secondary, "second order" domain, whose overarching goals are dominance and governance, "hermean." The language of the dual systems allows us to avoid such usages as "women's work" and men's work," or to suggest that "caring" tasks are "feminine" and "controlling" tactics are "masculine."

Helene Silverberg (1998) points out that economists regularly represented the market as an arena of production and exchange among male workers and male employers–even as the number of working women increased and women's consciousness as consumers became politicized. Political scientists depicted the "body politic" as exclusively male terrain, even though they often described it as a "household," and women assumed prominent new roles in the public sphere (9)."

Dual Statuses: Kinship and Citizenship

The status conferred by membership in an *oikos* is kinship; the status conferred by the *polis* is citizenship. Manville (1990) dates the emergence of citizenship to the period between Kleisthenes' reforms and the mid-5th century BCE, highlighted by the conflict between the *oikos* and *polis* described in Aeschylus' *Oresteia* and *Persians* (209, n. 180, cit. om.). For a general description of the meaning of citizenship in the Athenian *polis*, we can turn to the famed funeral oration of Pericles. As reported by Thucydides:

> You will find united in the same people an interest both in personal matters and public affairs..., and even those mostly occupied with their own endeavors know a good deal about political matters.... For we alone regard the man [sic] who takes no part in such things not as one who minds his own business..., but as one who has no business here at all ....(Manville 1990, 15, citing Thucydides. [(2.40.2].)

In Manville's view, one of the most telling parts of this speech is its distinction between private and public life. Also significant is the Athenian perception of the interdependence between the two, and the citizen's willingness to transcend the purely personal sphere in order to be involved in matters of the *polis*. To Manville, Pericles is "merging" the private and public spheres, and he identifies as a "bifurcation" the situation when the traditional family function of child raising is taken over by the *polis* in the case of children whose hero fathers had fallen in battle. Manville sees in this "a crucial underlying principle of the democratic polity, the *polis* superseding and incorporating at least some of the functions of the *oikos*" (15). However, I read this passage as an indication of ancient support for the notion of a two systems paradigm, a worldview that recognizes the interdependence of two socially constructed domains in everyday life. In any case, the need to distinguish the domains of daily activity are evident as far back as the 5th century BCE. Membership in an *oikos* was a precondition to Athenian citizenship. That relationship—the interface between Family/State–is evident to this day. Although men's role was visible, women's place in the male-dominated Athenian *polis* was ambiguous (Manville, 13, n. 48). We must remember that Aristotle's conceptions of the moral life and of the *polis* depend on the exclusion of all women and many men. It is clear that, even if women were excluded from the "public life" of the *polis*, they were deeply engaged in the "private life" of the *oikos*. I would argue that this decisive division continues to have relevance for home economics/family and consumer science educators today.

Historically, the hermean system of the *polis* grew in power and gained control over the resources and institutions essential for survival-oriented hestian work in the *oikos*-system. It became the marketplace of both commodities and ideas, supporting the discursive space considered essential for life in the "public sphere" of the emerging *polis*-system. Weinberg recognizes the *polis* as both an object of theoretical analysis and the metaphoric source of many of the key concepts of Western social and political theory (26). By recognizing the reality of these dual sites, we can see why the *oikos*-system is as deserving of attention as the *polis*-system. And, while we assume the role of education is to prepare students for citizenship, we do not make the same claim that education should prepare our youth for friendship and kinship. In these areas, adults have allowed the student's peer group to set the standards of behavior and the rituals of socialization.

Changing Gender Roles in the Dual Spheres

Dorothy E Smith (1990a) describes the difficulties a woman encounters when trying to manage a household and an academic career. She notes that the "bifurcation of consciousness" becomes a "daily chasm to be crossed." On one side is the world of "localized activities" (or ADLs), oriented toward particular others, such as "keeping things clean, managing somehow the house and household and the children–a world in which the particularities of persons in their full organic immediacy (feeding, cleaning up the vomit, changing the diapers) are inescapable." On the other side is the "special activity of thought, research, teaching, and administration" (20). I believe that the "two worlds" Smith identifies can be described as "hestian" and "hermean." Using these adjectives will help to extrapolate those aspects of discourse that collectively describe and inform the domestic domain.

Reva Landau, a Canadian feminist lawyer, has published articles on such issues as abortion, pornography, and parental benefits. In both the United States and Canada, increasing numbers of women are choosing to go "out" to work. Landau critiques a flood of magazine and newspaper articles published in the 1980s that encouraged women to drop out or work part-time without taking into account the economic consequences of such choices. She points out "how exhausting it is for a woman to work full-time and still run a house, pick up the laundry, take the children to and from daycare, etc. (1972, 51)." The articles she cites never suggested "it would be easier for women to work full-time outside the home if men made their own lunch, did their own ironing, drove the child to and from school, prepared dinner half the time and did half the housework" (ibid.)." Some household management problems can be resolved by convenience and take-out foods, wash-and-wear clothing, and car pooling. Nevertheless, such family decision-making can lead to role conflict and role strain, depending on the participants' experience of gender role socialization. When one or another partner in any relationship feels short-changed and over-worked, the stage is set for family tension and conflict.

Landau notes the opportunity costs for women who choose to work exclusively in the household/family unit. By opposing the "stay-at-home" mom who chooses to remain in the homeplace, on the grounds that fulfillment for women lies solely in the marketplace, feminists risk alienating such women from supporting the abstract goal of "gender equality." According to Landau, women who do, in fact, choose not to participate in the "outside

the home" workforce can hurt themselves, their children, and other women. Landau's solution is to "make" men share in "housework" and "childcare." Such a characterization of the work necessary to maintain the family ecosystem is too simplistic. It misses the interdependence of instrumental with emotional work. The activities of daily life needed to maintain household/family units is not static but dynamic, closely tied to human developmental needs and to the personalities and the capacities of those responsible for meeting such needs. As a feminist, I maintain there is a difference between doing household tasks mindlessly and creating that special human environment called "home."

As more women (including wives and mothers) enter the public workplace (the hermean marketplace), the private workplace (the hestian homeplace) continues to make demands and require attention. People must still be nourished, sheltered, clothed, and cared for economically, emotionally, and spiritually. Paid help presents the paradox of economically disadvantaged women whose employment requires that they leave their own homeplace and arrange for the care of their own children while they care for their employers' families. Barbara Ehrenreich (2000) discerns a growing class polarization in this trend.

The Washington Post recently reported that an increasing number of women earn more than their husbands, tilting the economic balance in marriage and often bringing about a reversal of the "breadwinner"/"homemaker" roles. Richard B. Freedman, a Harvard economist, has studied changes in the patterns of couples' earnings. He points to such underlying social changes as a dramatic increase in the number of women graduating from college, women's increasing willingness to work full-time, to divert less time from job to childcare, and to enter fields once dominated by men (Goldstein 2000, 18). According to his analysis of data from a federal population survey, the effects of these changes mean that roughly 30 percent of working wives of all ages—from their twenties to their sixties–are paid more than their husbands, and this shift in wage-earning potential has consequences for household management. He concluded that there has been a "bending," rather than a "breaking," of the ways couples divide their responsibilities.

Anecdotal stories of women with six-figure incomes choosing to stay at home with young children occasionally blip across the screen of our consciousness. A recent, well-publicized custody case, referred to as "Mr. Mom vs. Mogul Mom," is an example of role reversal, where corporate lawyer

Mom chose to climb the ladder of corporate success and Dad, trained as an architect, chose to stay home with two daughters, aged 10 and 13–a not-so-surprising fact, given that in 1994 nearly 19 percent of the nation's 10.3 million preschoolers were cared for primarily by their fathers. That represents a 5 percent increase over 1977 when fathers cared for 14 percent of preschool children. Although the couple in this case could afford fulltime household help, the fact that Mom's $300,000 salary was sufficient to provide for the family allowed Dad to start a Brownie troop, get involved with the PTA, and coach the girls' soccer games. The first trial judge in the case asked the stay-at-home dad "Why don't you get a job?" The likelihood that a stay-at-home mom would be similarly queried seems remote, and many charged the judge with sexism. Clearly, new issues are emerging as women gain entrée to demanding and remunerative professions. Public opinion has yet to settle whether the case is a symbol of bias against fathers or an example of punishment for working moms (Sharp 1999, 5A). In any case, it points to the need for men, as well as women, to be educated for child care and related matters in the household. When Virginia Held (1991) observes that "Unless household and childrearing labor are divided more fairly and justice sought within as well as outside the household, women cannot possibly attain justice. Yet the major theories of justice (and she cites Rawls, Nozick, Dworkin, and Ackerman), are still developed and discussed as if their subjects are–effectively if not formally–male heads of household, not women as well as men" (300). She makes the case for educating men for the hestian domain.

Based on this brief account of changing gender roles, it should be clear that the current crisis in education has both familial and political ramifications.

Recent Interest in Home Economics

In her study of gender and social science, Helene Silverberg (1998) includes a chapter on the rise of Home Economics which she describes as "a unique female dominated academic discipline devoted to the home and family" at Cornell (25). Nancy K. Berlage writes:

> Between the 1870s and the 1920s, home economics emerged and matured as an academic discipline. In contrast to almost all other social sciences, this discipline was centrally defined by women, who, in shap-

> ing the field, responded to a constellation of forces both within the university and in the broader culture. First, they drew upon a widespread tradition of female reform that allowed women to claim authority in realms beyond the home. Second, they appealed to the growing cultural authority of science in formulating a professional identity inside the university. While these two traditions advocated different, and often seemingly incommensurate, ideals, home economists readily drew upon both in their academic pursuits. At the same time that they worked within prevailing gender conventions, they also redrew the boundaries that constituted women's activities. What emerged from this process was an applied social science that bridged the gap between public institutions and private homes. (Berlage 1998, 185)

I believe that the hestian/hermean paradigm resolves the question of "incommensurability" Berlage detects and also places Home Economics in a unique position within the dual systems paradigm. Such a perspective in the current literature bodes well for a reappraisal of Home Economics, its history, philosophy, and educational mission in the coming millennium.

In an essay describing the "new politics" of housework, Barbara Ehrenreich describes her own experience as a housecleaner for hire. [2] She describes the complex issues surrounding "outsourcing" domestic work to franchised businesses such as "Merry Maids." The goal of paid housecleaning services, as Ehrenreich describes them, "is not so much to clean so much as it is to create the appearance of having been cleaned, not to sanitize but to create a kind of stage setting for family life. And the stage setting Americans seem to prefer is sterile only in the metaphorical sense, like a motel room or the fake interiors in which soap operas and sitcoms take place" (67). Whereas housework may, as Ehrenreich suggests, define power relationships of domination and oppression, it is my contention that hestian work defines interpersonal relationships over the lifespan, the work of sustaining and nurturing human capital and empowering people to care for themselves and to care for others. But once the house is cleaned, the household members still need sustenance and nurturance, for which the family remains the provider of first (and often last) resort, even when "help"or "care" is provided for pay. The ultimate responsibility of the quality of such care and the effects of such care on the recipients is another matter.

As Ehrenreich observes, "when the person who is cleaned up after is consistently male, while the person who cleans up is consistently female, you have a formula for reproducing male domination from one generation to the next" (61). As affluence and house size increases, some American families have become dependent on paid housekeepers, and this trend may (if the "help" is available at an "affordable" cost), extend even further down into the middle class. As she points out:

> There is another lesson that the servant economy teaches its beneficiaries and, most troublingly, the children among them. To be cleaned up after is to achieve a certain magical weightlessness and immateriality. Almost everyone complains about violent video games, but paid housekeeping has the same consequences–abolishing effect: you blast the villain into a mist of blood droplets and move right along; you drop the socks knowing they will eventually levitate, laundered and folded, back to their normal dwelling place. The result is a kind of virtual existence, in which the trail of litter that follows you seems to evaporate all by itself.... A servant economy breeds callousness and solipsism in the served, and it does so all the more effectively when the service is performed close-up and routinely in the place where they live and reproduce. (70)

From the perspective of women's experience in the "private sphere," the category "work" poses a definitional problem. Work is generally defined as paid employment in the marketplace. That definition includes one kind of work but excludes domestic labor. That the word "labor" is used for childbirth and that "housework" has such a pejorative sound may require revisiting.

What are we to make of the astounding popularity of Martha Stewart, who has succeeded in making the home the center of a highly-focused campaign to make what Ehrenreich calls a "stage setting." Despite a spate of home-focused magazines, the ascendancy of the "Martha Stewart" phenomenon is complex both psychologically and commercially. Apparently publishers see a market for books on home care. Lawyer Cheryl Mendelson recently published a hefty tome called *Home Comforts: The Art and Science of Keeping House* (1999) a compendium of information reminiscent of Catharine Beecher's 19th century *Treatise on Domestic Economy*, a best-seller in its time.The solution proposed by the 19th century domestic science movement, reflected in Catherine Beecher's work was intended to afford

women autonomy and independence within the household/family unit as well as in the eleemosynary institutions of society. In popular language, the wife/mother became the "Angel in the House" or "The Minister of the Home." In contemporary life, "the reigning ideology still holds that the family is responsible for the family, that barring some special circumstances like extreme poverty, caring for children and other dependents is a personal, not a public concern (Toner 1999, 29). If we realize that the marketplace promotes consumer culture, we must ask how excessive consumerism (materialism) affects the homeplace, especially our concern with "family values." Elizabeth Austin (2000) recognizes the "insatiable appetite for information" on domestic topics and reports that of the 25 books currently leading Amazon.com's sales, nine would "fit comfortably into any basic home ec reading list" (9). Isn't there a message in this for home economics/family and consumer sciences educators.

Education for Roles in Dual Domains

The perspective proposed by the dual systems paradigm suggests that everyday life is socially constructed in dual domains which began with humankind's first efforts to order and organize the activities of daily life. From campfire to hearthfire, human groups clustered for warmth, security, and companionship. On the one hand, humans organize themselves in private domestic units, variously defined as "families," with common functions but different kinship systems based on cultural traditions. Kinship confers the individual's primary identity. By extension, larger public units (generally patriarchal in form and function) organized themselves in civic units variously defined as "states" and "nations," membership in which confers citizenship. Citizenship represents a secondary identity. Family interests have been gradually subordinated to state and national interests. By introducing an alternative version of systems theory, I find it possible to include family systems within the boundaries of a feminist theory that values the hestian work of the household and allows us to compare and contrast the obligations and responsibilities in each domain.

Education for Citizenship

As described by Brown (1987), "Political discourse presupposes some conception of 'polity,' some community in which knowledge for the sake of action can be communicated across groups, classes, and statuses (1)." He writes:

> The essence of citizenship is the participation of the individual in the polity as a whole person. But when the self is fragmented into its various personae and roles, and when the citizen is replaced by the functionary or consumer, there is a concomitant fragmentation of that society's notion of moral agency and political obligation. (29)

What Brown refers to as a self "fragmented into various roles" is a self torn between its place in the hestian (domestic) economy and the hermean (political) economy. I would submit that the "whole person" needed to be an effective citizen is someone whose self-system is balanced between hestian/hermean sensibilities. Brown identifies a bifurcation between a private, "arational" self that operates on the basis of affective feelings, values, and emotions and a public self guided by a "positive, instrumental reason, and he argues that "this bifurcation has engendered a crisis of citizenship, legitimation, and political obligation" (1). Such thinking creates a false opposition. We have seen plenty of examples where the public self is "arational" and the private self is guided by "positive, instrumental reason." The issue, I would argue, is the goal or purpose of the action in the system, i.e. whether its intent is to strengthen and preserve the domestic unit or to strengthen and preserve the civic unit, we must learn to view both domains of life in such a way that they strengthen and reinforce each other. Perhaps the educational pendulum has swung too far in its focus on citizenship education, i.e, education for the public, civic sphere, and too far away from kinship education, i.e., education for the private, domestic sphere. Oddly, attempts on the part of home economics educators in the past decades to be more inclusive in what is meant by "family" created a conservative backlash. Not only was home economics assaulted by the right, it also had its detractors among feminists, who argued that women needed to be dis-placed from the hestian into the hermean domains.

Education for Kinship

Political philosophy and education for citizenship has enjoyed a privileged part in American life and education. Under the old paradigm, one might say that all education was to prepare students for civic life which included productive participation in the marketplace economy. At the same time, it was assumed that education to prepare students for domestic life and productive participation in the household economy would somehow "take care of itself" if people studied hard and succeeded in finding and retaining

employment. Something, as television commentators are fond of repeating, seems to "have gone terribly wrong." Recent incidents of aggression in the schools across the nation have appalled the public. What explains the actions of violent students in the schools? When such events occur, we return to concern with the family. What prompts students from what appear to be stable and economically secure homes to commit such outrages as those at Columbine and elsewhere? We may not be asking the right questions, and we have certainly not yet found the right answers.

Political rhetoric that exploits "family values" and suggests that solution to the current educational crisis can be solved by measures that would replace public education with such private sector solutions as home schools and vouchers can be interrogated within the hestian/hermean paradigm. Perhaps the time has come to advocate for education that prepares students for both their domestic and their civic responsibilities, a point historically involved in home economics and family and consumer sciences education.

"Domestic Literacy": A New Goal for Advocacy

In a recent article of surprising insight, Elizabeth Austin makes a case for what we might call "domestic literacy, "pointing out that "There are millions of men and women of my generation who are missing a whole cluster of basic life skills....We don't have the basic competence to run our homes smoothly and efficiently, so we can't pass down these skills to the next generation" (1999, 9). She continues that "it is criminal that we are allowing generations to grow up without the basic knowledge they need to care for themselves, their children, and their homes." (9-10). To those who argue that "Home ec is stupid. Home ec is sexist," Austin urges a look at the core subjects in the home economics curriculum:

child development
nutrition
personal health
personal finance, and
consumer protection.

Austin has focused on many of the topics that are familiar to teachers of the subject, but does not mention family relationships. She sees signs of a revival of the "homely arts," and she urges that schools "fan the resurgence in the domestic arts....For the thousands of kids who don't have skilled adults

to teach them, a renewal of home ec classes could be a godsend.... We need to do a better job of teaching our children how to live, and we need to start right now (12)." Austin also notes the decline in enrolments in degree programs in family and consumer sciences, and the lack of trained teachers to teach the subject.

In an era in which family relationships are strained to the breaking point, and almost a third of young people will at some time live in a step- or foster family, bringing hestian values to the fore should be a priority. Clearly, there is a new call for continuity and stability, the essential qualities of the hestian domain. This is not necessarily a call for a return to a single standard of family life, as some well-meaning advocates of the traditional family form insist. There must be a recognition, for better or for worse, that people live in diverse family types. Whatever the family type, the activities of daily life must be undertaken with efficiency and emotional commitment. How much do people really know about the subjects in the "core curriculum" identified by Austin? How "domestically competent" are adults who may be successful in their employment but failures in their relationships? Is it in the nation's best interests to settle for the "commodification of Hestia," or should the "domestic arts" once again provide a source of esthetic enjoyment, creativity, and ethical principle? For those who still hold a loyalty to the enduring values of the home economics curriculum as it was conceptualized over a century ago, the time has come to listen to the voices calling for a balance between our domestic and civic lives and to re-introduce education for the hestian domain on a par with education for the hermean domain.

Recently, as a result of the outreach of our college office of public affairs, I was interviewed by two young women journalists. One was in California, where she had noted the resurgence of interest in home ec among students from affluent communities, and another from Florida, who was interested oin how home ec instruction might help consumers resist the blandishments of Martha Stewart. Perhaps there is something in the Zeitgeist that professionals in the field need to take note of and to respond to the recognition that there is a genuine social need to "prep" students for life—a life that includes kinship (family relations and child care) as well as citizenship.

Notes

1. At the Fourth lake Placid Conference in 1902 home economics was defined as a study of relation.
2. In her essay, Ehrenreich refers to her book *For Her Own Good* (1979), co-authored with Deirdre English, which, in my view, cast some undeserved criticisms at home economics and the work of home economists.

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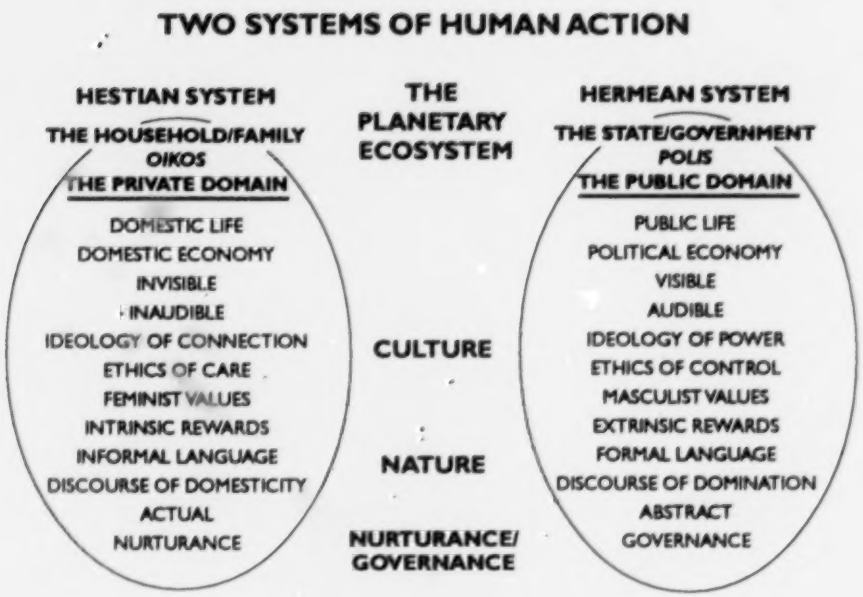
Figure 1



Reconceptualizing *Oikos* and *Polis*

In the 5th century B.C.E., philosophical discourse (commencing with Plato and Aristotle) was largely bent on separating the "private world" of the *oikos* from the "public world" of the *polis*. In this process, the domestic was gradually eclipsed by the civic. The interest and ideologies of women and slaves of both sexes were equally adumbrated, which makes gender an "unstable" category for sustained forms of inquiry. Ever since, the power imbalance between the domestic and the civic domains has had profound consequences for the conduct of "family life" in Western societies. It has made the State, rather than the Family, the exclusive subject/object of theory and philosophy (Thompson, 1994).

To the ancient Greeks, the *oikos* was the domestic (household/family) unit where the process of *oikonomeia*, by which they meant the management of household resources, i.e., the domestic economy, occurred. The *oikos* was not just a space, territory, or "house" in our current understanding of such concepts. It was an ecosystem (*oikos*-system), a life support system for its inhabitants, in the same way Hook and Paolucci (1970) conceptualize the modern family as an ecosystem. As Aristotle described it, *oikonomeia* was the system of basic life support activities that sustained a domestic unit, some of whose members were related by kinship, but all of whom identified with the same domestic hearth, or *hestia*, whose presiding goddess was also called Hestia.